

Missouri Department of Higher Education College Access Challenge Grant

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

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COVER LETTER

Dear Colleagues:

Increasing the number of residents that have quality degrees and credentials is a primary goal of the Missouri Department of Higher Education and the state of Missouri. Through the College Access Challenge Grant program (CACG), the MDHE is addressing this goal by offering financial support to programs of non-profit organizations that are geared toward increasing the number of Missouri students in postsecondary education.

Established by Congress as part of the 2007 College Cost Reduction and Access Act, the CACG aims to foster partnerships among federal, state, and local governments to assist low-income middle and high school students gain access to and succeed in postsecondary education. During this award cycle, there will be approximately \$1.6 million available to distribute to eligible organizations. Funded programs must demonstrate they will achieve results toward at least one of the following Missouri objectives:

- Providing effective information to students and families on postsecondary education benefits, opportunities, and planning.
- Providing actionable information to prospective students and their families on financing options, including activities that promote financial literacy, debt avoidance and management.
- Assisting prospective and continuing students in the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

This is the third award cycle for this program and the MDHE has revised the Request for Proposals document used in previous award cycles based on feedback from staff and applicants. The revisions include requiring that awards be issued in four disbursements, with a requirement to expend 90% of each disbursement before receiving subsequent disbursements. Awardees will also be required to submit an Annual Performance Report to account for total grant expenses and demonstrate progress toward identified objectives. The deadline for the Annual Performance Report will be March 16, 2012.

It is the goal of the MDHE to distribute the grant funds equitably by geographic area within the state. This means that the MDHE must consider the location of the school districts served by a project and take into account school districts potentially served by other proposed projects and those served by existing projects.

To reach the goals established for postsecondary participation, we must develop a broad based approach to reach potential students and change the culture of many of our high schools. It is our intent that the CACG promote the design of high quality proposals that will generate systemic change and benefit underserved population. We encourage eligible organizations to join us in creating that change.

Sincerely,

Leroy Wade Assistant Commissioner Financial Assistance, Outreach, and Proprietary Certification

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

PURPOSE OF THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) program is a formula grant program that was created as part of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (CFDA 84.378A). The purpose of the CACG program is to foster partnerships among federal, state, and local governments and philanthropic organizations through matching challenge grants that are aimed at increasing the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. As the state's higher education agency, the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) is uniquely positioned to effectively implement the CACG to assist the state in identifying successful strategies to increase postsecondary participation in underserved populations.

The MDHE has been approved to administer a sub-grant program as part of the CACG program for eligible, not-for-profit, philanthropic and consortia organizations¹. All proposals will be required to meet the guidelines established by the federal statute. Maximum grant amounts will be \$100,000 and may be renewable, based on compliance with reporting requirements, demonstrated program performance and funding availability. Regional partnerships between two and four-year institutions of postsecondary education and not-for-profit entities are encouraged. Proposals must document that grant funds will be matched with nonfederal funds (one dollar of matching funds for every two dollars of grant funds) as required by the authorizing statute. Preference will be given to proposals geared toward establishing regional public and private partnerships, providing effective information to students and families on postsecondary education benefits, opportunities, and planning; providing actionable information to prospective students and their families on financing options, including activities that promote financial literacy and debt avoidance and management; conducting outreach activities for students who may be at risk of not enrolling in or completing college; assisting prospective and continuing students in the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and tracking student FAFSA completion.

The MDHE is seeking to identify and select independent organizations to perform the activities listed above. The remainder of this document provides additional information that will allow a not-for-profit, philanthropic organization, or a consortium of such organizations, to understand the scope of the effort and develop a proposal in the desired format.

Proposal narratives should describe the project's design in detail and emphasize how the project will achieve results toward at least one of the following Missouri objectives:

- ➤ Provide effective information to students and families on postsecondary education benefits, opportunities, planning and career preparation.
- ➤ Provide actionable information on financing options, including activities that promote financial literacy, debt avoidance and management among students and families.
- ➤ Conduct outreach activities for students who may be at risk of not enrolling in or completing college.

¹ See Appendix A, Definitions of Important Terms and Acronyms, page 12.

- Assist prospective and continuing students in the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- > Tracking student FAFSA completion.

In addition, proposals will be evaluated on their ability to impact the following requirements established for this program at the federal level:

- Percentage of high school seniors completing FAFSA
- Extent to which priority is given to students and families who are living below the poverty line applicable to the individual's family size

ADMINISTRATIVE

CONTRACTUAL CONTACT

Any questions regarding contractual terms and conditions or proposal format must be directed to:

Timothy Hopkins Research Associate Missouri Department of Higher Education P.O. Box 1469 Jefferson City, MO 65102-1469 573-522-2384

DUE DATES

A written confirmation of the organization's intent to respond to this RFP is required by **November 15, 2010**. All proposals are due by time 5/pm CST on **November 30, 2010**. Any proposal received at the designated location after the required time and date specified for receipt shall be considered late and non-responsive. Late proposals will not be evaluated for award.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- ➤ Request for Proposal (RFP) distribution to organizations
- ➤ Written confirmation of organizations with interest in participating in the College Access Challenge Grant
- Questions from organizations about scope or approach
- Responses to organizations about the scope or approach
- > Proposal due date
- > Target date for review of proposals
- Final organization selection discussion(s)

WRITTEN CONFIRMATION IS NEEDED BY NOVEMBER 15

PROPOSAL FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

All proposals should be written using the following order and headings. Your use of the order and headings provided below will ensure that proposal reviewers are better able to consistently evaluate all of the proposals. All forms are provided in Appendix C and are **required** unless otherwise stated. **Grant awardees seeking renewal must complete Forms C72 & C73**. In addition to including a narrative that addresses the required components in this section, applicants are expected to follow Proposal Format and Requirements as outlined below. Please also see the scoring rubric located on pages 11-12, for further details.

- I. Proposal Cover Page (Form C70)
- II. Project Abstract (Form C71)
- III. Proposal Services Activities (Form C72)
- IV. Proposal Actual Grant Expenditures (Form C73)
- V. Proposal Budget Summary (Form C74)
- VI. Table of Contents
- VII. Proposal Narrative (please limit to twenty pages).
 - A. Executive Summary
 - B. Organization Description
 - C. Scope, Approach and Methodology
 - D. Project Management Approach
 - E. Deliverables
 - F. Performance Objectives and Measurement Plan
 - G. Budget Summary
 - H. Budget Justification
- VIII. Proposal Appendices
 - A. Organization Documents
 - B. Project Team Staffing
 - C. Organization Overview

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Summary should be a brief overview of planned activities and should identify the main features and benefits of the proposal.

Organization Description

This section of the proposal should provide a general description of the organization submitting the proposal. In the case where a consortium of organizations are involved in the delivery of grant funded activities, this section should identify the additional organizations and provide a description of the nature and scope of the consortium arrangement. This section should describe how all involved organizations meet the eligibility requirements established for participation in the program. Copies of organizational documents for all participating organizations must be attached as Appendix A. The MDHE requires that eligible organizations include only direct costs in their grant proposals. This policy is based on the condition for the receipt of the grant funds by the MDHE from the United States Department of Education.

SCOPE, APPROACH, AND METHODOLOGY

This section will act as the Statement of Work (SOW) to be used as a guideline by the evaluators during the review process. All information provided will remain confidential. At a minimum, the proposal should reflect information on:

> Project Participants/Target Audience

This section of the SOW should clearly describe the projected participants in the planned activities and how this target audience complies with the directives for focus of the grant program. While all students served are not required to be part of the target population, the proposal must indicate how it will ensure appropriate participation of the target population.

> Project Design Objectives

The project objectives should provide a clear description of what the project is designed to accomplish, linking it with the overall grant program, as outlined by federal statute and RFP format requirements. It must clearly link these objectives with those established for the overall grant program both within the federal statute and in the instructions of this RFP.

> Project Activities/Structure

This section should include a detailed description of the activities that are planned to be funded through the proposed project, the timeline for the delivery of these activities, the personnel that will be involved in the delivery and the duration of the services to be provided.

> Project Evaluation

This section should clearly describe the process the applicant will use to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the funded activities. This must include identification of the relevant data items, description of the mechanisms to be used to collect that data, the format and structure of the evaluation report that will be submitted to the MDHE, and the timeline for the preparation and delivery of the report.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Include the method and approach used to manage the overall project. Briefly describe how the proposal proceeds from beginning to end.

DELIVERABLES

Include descriptions and samples of the types of materials used to provide effective information to students and families on postsecondary education benefits, opportunities, and planning; to provide actionable information to prospective students and their families on financing options that promote financial literacy and debt avoidance and management; to conduct outreach activities for students who may be at risk of not enrolling in or completing college; and to assist prospective and continuing students in the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Performance Objectives and Measurement Plan

This section of the proposal must identify the primary objectives of the funded project. These objectives must be directly measurable and the proposal must identify what measures will be associated with each primary objective. The proposal must also include a description of the plan to implement this assessment process; to include identifying how and what data will be collected for each identified objective and describing the format for the reporting of this information to the department. These measures must clearly connect with the overall objectives of the project.

APPENDIX: ORGANIZATION DOCUMENTS

Include documents, such as corporate registration or related documents, which confirm the application organization and all participating organizations, if applicant represents a consortium of organizations, meet program eligibility ²criteria. A brief history of the organization or consortium should be provided including information about when and how the organization was established. This section should also include the names, titles, addresses, and telephone and fax numbers for all key project personnel.

APPENDIX: PROJECT TEAM STAFFING

Include biographies and relevant experience of key staff and management personnel. List the personnel who would work on this project along with their qualifications and relevant experience.

See Appendix A	
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EQUITABLE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The MDHE plans to distribute grants equitably by geographic region within the state. This means that the MDHE must consider the location of the school districts served by a project and take into account school districts potentially served by other proposed projects and those served by existing projects.

EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD

Any award made pursuant to this RFP will be based upon the proposal as submitted. Appropriate consideration will be given to the extent to which the proposal is geared toward providing information to students and families based upon federal statute and MDHE program objectives. Once grants are awarded, MDHE staff will conduct two on-site visits with grant recipients to monitor progress.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Grant recipients will be required to submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) by March 2012 to determine if the funded projects are making substantial progress in meeting goals and objectives of the grant. The APR will address the implementation of services and activities, project administration, and fiscal administration. While additional activities may be included in the proposal, which may be considered as part of the review, primary weight will be given to the listed services and activities.

PROPOSAL SCORING RUBRIC

Commitment (10 points)

- Clearly identifies the qualifying project participants
- Clearly identifies regional partnerships
- Describes how the proposing organization or consortium will contribute to the success of the project by outlining specific commitments
- Describes how the proposing organization or consortium will contribute to the success of the project by tracking student FAFSA completion

Project Design (45 points maximum)

- Explains the project's design in detail
 - Description of project activities
 - Location and timeline for the duration of the project
 - o How participants will be actively engaged in the project activities
 - Alignment with proven techniques for increasing the rates of underserved Missourians who attend and succeed in higher education
- Describes how each of the five state objectives will be achieved
 - o Identifies specific project objectives and linkages with the state objectives
 - o Measures of progress including development of baseline data

Participants (10 points)

• Identifies the anticipated number of participants from the target audience

- Verifies the proportion of participants that are from underserved populations and economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Discusses the level of participation of the institution's faculty and staff in the delivery and administration of the project

Sustainability (5 points)

• Describes realistic potential for sustainability beyond the project end date

Dissemination (10 points)

- Describes how sub-grantees will inform colleagues of their experiences in and results from this project
- Describes how results of the project will be made available to other organizations, on a statewide basis

Evaluation (20 points)

- Provides assurances of access to data
- Ensures the inclusion of formative evaluations to identify potential problems and shortcomings
- Develops a well designed assessment plan to conduct a summative evaluation of the project's effectiveness

Budget (20 points)

- Personnel costs are reasonable
- Budget form is prepared correctly and is free of errors
- Budget justification adequately explains/supports budget line items
- Budget verifies commitment of adequate non-federal matching funds

Qualitative Evaluation (10 points)

- Overall significance and potential impact of project
- Overall clarity and organization of proposal

Bonus Points (10 points maximum)

• More than 75% of students participating in the program are underrepresented in postsecondary education

RFP APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Definitions of Important Terms

APR: Annual Performance Report

At-Risk Students: Those students with a lower chance of succeeding in colleges due to cultural, socio-economic, or academic background

CACG: College Access Challenge Grant Program

CCRA: College Cost Reduction and Access Act

CFDA: Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance: directory which organizes and categorizes federal assistance programs into a uniform and standardized system

EDGAR: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations. A copy of the regulations can be seen at http://www.ed.gov/policy/fund/reg/edgarReg/edgar.html

Eligible Consortia: Defined as a partnership of two or more eligible entities that have agreed to work together to carry out this section that (A) includes non-profit organizations, government entities (including local municipalities, school districts, cities, and counties), institutions of higher education, and other public or private programs that have proven expertise in mentoring or outreach programs; and (B) conducts activities to assist students with entering and remaining in college, which may include:

- Providing need-based grants to students
- Providing early notification to low-income students of their potential eligibility for Federal financial aid (which may include assisting students and families with filling out FAFSA forms), as well as other financial aid and other support available from the eligible consortia
- Encouraging increased student participation in higher education through mentoring or outreach programs
- Conduct marketing and outreach efforts that are designed to encourage full participation of students in the activities of the consortia that carry out this section; and provide the communities impacted by the activities of the consortia with a general knowledge about the efforts of the consortia.

Formative Evaluation: A method of judging the effectiveness of a program while the program activities are happening in order to obtain feedback that can be used to improve the program or activities. Formative evaluation focuses on the processes by which the activities are conducted.

Major Role: Having key responsibilities such as those of a project director, co-director, or

consultant, or it may also be defined in terms of the amount of money received in compensation from the grant.

SOW: Statement of Work

Summative Evaluation: A method of judging the effectiveness of a program at the end of the program activities. Summative evaluation focuses on the outcomes of program activities.

Underrepresented students: Members of historically disadvantaged groups usually characterized as belonging to a minority or ethnic group or other category of persons who have experienced discrimination and are specifically protected by anti-discrimination statutes. Minority groups include African Americans, Hispanics, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asians, and Pacific Islanders.

Underserved students: Students having one or more of the following characteristics: disabled, poor, minority-born, homeless, or unemployed; underserved students may include migrant workers, refugees, and persons living in rural/remote areas or other underserved regions of the state. Underserved populations are often difficult to reach, either physically or by the sheer force of circumstances.

ACRONYMS

MDHE – Missouri Department of Higher Education

SOW – Statement of Work RFP – Request for Proposal

APPENDIX B

BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS, BUDGET SUMMARY FORM, AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Budget Instructions

This page contains instructions for completing the **Budget Summary Form** for aggregated expenses. A written **Budget Justification** is also required. In order to be eligible for funding, the applicant must provide documentation of the availability and commitment of sufficient resources to fulfill the non-federal matching requirement.

Applications must include evidence that no more than two-thirds of the total cost of the proposal will be funded by federal grant funds directly from the MDHE. The remaining one-third must be provided by the applicant using non-federal fund sources. This may include state appropriations, private gifts or in-kind contributions, or funds from other sources used directly in the delivery of services as part of this proposal.

1. Personnel Costs

Personnel should be listed individually and should include a project director and support staff. After each name, indicate (in parentheses) the role of that person in the project. Salaries cannot be drawn at a rate higher than that which the individual would normally receive in his/her regular duties. Graduate students employed as project personnel should be paid a fair wage in the same manner as other grant personnel. Graduate educational fees for employees cannot be charged to the grant.

Fringe benefits can be paid only to those individuals who are employees of, and who would normally receive benefits from, the applicant organization or those working within an approved consortium agreement. **Please specify the benefit rate in percent form.**

2. Additional Personnel Costs

This section is for additional personnel with different benefit rates from those in (1) above. Explain the roles of additional personnel and justify inclusion of such personnel in the project.

3. Participant Costs

All items must be listed individually with per-item cost information and estimated quantities detailed in the Budget Justification. Books and materials and/or equipment are limited to those that will actually be needed during the project's duration. It is expected that materials

will be purchased as inexpensively as possible and that reasonable effort will be made to obtain materials as an in-kind donation from other public agencies and private enterprises whenever possible.

4. Additional Costs

This section is for costs other than salaries and participant expenses. Expenses may be lumped into logical categories but all items must be itemized and explained in the Budget Justification.

5. TOTAL Costs

This is the total of Items 1 through 4.

Appendix C

SERVICES ACTIVITIES & ACTUAL GRANT EXPENDITURES INSTRUCTIONS AND FORMS

The **Services Activities** and **Actual Grant Expenditures** forms must be completed by the Project Director. **Renewal** applicants <u>must</u> complete these two forms and provide documentation of the availability and commitment of sufficient resources to sustain grant activities. Renewal applications must include the types of services/activities provided, number of high school seniors that completed the FAFSA, and provide the ethnic background of students that received services. Renewal applicants must also provide the **actual** costs and grant match of the previous grant proposal.

APPENDIX D

PROPOSAL FORMS

(All forms must be submitted with the project proposal, unless otherwise noted.)

Form C70 – Proposal Cover Page

Form C71 – Project Abstract

Form C72 – Services Activities

Form C73 – Actual Grant Expenditures

Form C74 – Budget Summary

Form C70 - Proposal Cover Page

Project Title (not to exceed 20 words)			
1. Name of Institution			
	Name	Title	
	A 11	Please specify college/department (e.g. State University, Chemistry)	
2 D : (D:)	Address	Telephone Number	
2. Project Director	ctor		
	E-mail Address		
	Signature	Date	
4. Address and telepho	ne number where project director	5. To be completed by an Authorized Officer from the	
may be contacted	1 3	applicant organization or consortium: (contact name, title,	
		address, phone, e-mail)	
		Signature	

Form C71 - Project Abstract

P	roject Title:	
Ir	nstitution:	
P	artnerships: (Please expand or condense appropriate rows as	needed)
	Institution/Organization	Location/Contact Person
P	roject Information:	
	Length of Project: ☐ Year 2011-2012	
	Project area(s) of focus	
	Anticipated number of participants	
	Anticipated start date of actual project activities	
	Anticipated number of students directly impacted	
P	roject Summary (300 words, single-spaced):	
T	imeline for Project (Table format only):	

Form C72 Service Activities – College Access Challenge Grant

Institution:			
Project Director:			
Project Title:			
1. Type of Service Activities	Place an "X" in this column if your project provides this type of service	Number of Students	
Information for students and families (i.e., postsecondary education benefits, opportunities, planning, financial options, and college preparation.)			
Outreach activities			
Assistance in completion of FAFSA or other financial reporting forms			
Academic enrichment			
Other (please specify)			
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS			
2. Please provide the ethnic background of stud	lents that received s	services	
Ethnicity		Number of Students	
American Indian or Alaska Native			
Asian			
Black or African American			
Hispanic or Latino			
White			
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander			
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS			
3. Please provide the number of high school seniors who completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in the 2010-2011 academic year			
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS			
Project Director(s) Name and Title:			
Authorized Institutional Officer Name and Title			

Form C73 Actual Grant Expenditures – College Access Challenge Grant

Institution:			
Project Director:			
Project Title:			
1. Personnel Costs (Director and support staff)	2010-2011 Proposal	ACTUAL COSTS	ACTUAL GRANT MATCH
A.			
B.			
C.			
D.			
Fringe benefits (approved institutional rate %)			
TOTAL PERSONNEL COSTS			
2. Additional Personnel Costs			T
A.			
В.			
C.			
Fringe benefits (approved institutional rate %)			
TOTAL ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL COSTS			
3. Participant Costs (Materials and related items)	T		T
A.			
B.			
C.			
TOTAL PARTICIPANT COSTS			
4. Additional Costs (List individually; detail in budg A.	et justification nari	rative)	1
B.			
С.			
TOTAL ADDITIONAL COSTS			
5. TOTAL COSTS (Sum of items 1-4)			
Project Director(s) Name and Title:	l l		1
Authorized Institutional Officer Name and Title:			

Form C74 Budget Summary – College Access Challenge Grant

Institution:			
Project Director:			
Project Title:			
Personnel Costs	2011-2012 CACG Budget	In-Kind Match	Cash Match
(Director and support staff) A.	Duuget		
B.			
C.			
D.			
Fringe benefits (approved institutional rate %)			
TOTAL PERSONNEL COSTS			
2. Additional Personnel Costs			
A.			
В.			
C.			
Fringe benefits (approved institutional rate %)			
TOTAL ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL COSTS			
3. Participant Costs (Materials and related items)			
A.			
B.			
C.			
TOTAL PARTICIPANT COSTS			
4. Additional Costs (List individually; detail in budge	et justification narrative)		
A.			
В.			
C.			
TOTAL ADDITIONAL COSTS			
5. TOTAL COSTS (Sum of items 1–4)			
(Sum of items 1–4)			
Project Director(s) Name and Title:			
, ,			
Authorized Institutional Officer Name and Title:			

Budget Justification

The Budget Justification is a written narrative that is submitted with the Budget Summary Form as an appendix to the project proposal. Please use the headings provided below. The Budget Justification should address each of the following categories that are also listed on the Budget Summary Form.

Personnel/Additional Personnel Costs

Explain how the salary amount for each person listed in either personnel section of the Budget Summary Form was derived by providing a clear calculation of the expected real-time contribution of the person to the project. Indicate the salary the person receives as a function of his/her regular appointment. Also, describe the roles of all personnel and justify their inclusion in the project. Some description of the mechanism for tracking the time billed to the project should be provided.

Participant Costs

Detail all participant costs of the project, and list the per-item cost information and the estimated quantities needed for the project. Explain why these expenses are necessary to achieve the project's objectives and activities.

Additional Costs

Itemize all additional expenses for the project years. Explain why these expenses are necessary to achieving the project's objectives and activities.